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WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM,
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA
AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

Durban, 31 August - 7 September 2001
Item 9 of the provisional agenda

CONFERENCE THEMES

NGO contributions

Contribution* submitted by European Women's Lobby

The secretariat has received the following written statement, which is transmitted to the World Conference.

* This contribution is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization.

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ENG

Founded in 1990, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) is an alliance of national and European non-governmental women's organisations working to promote equality between women and men and to ensure that gender equality and women's rights are taken into consideration in all European Union Policies. The issue of racism and racial discrimination constitutes a priority for the EWL, as we believe that within the overall fight against racism, targeted and specific measures for women are also needed. The EWL would like to emphasize that even though we belong to one human race, it is necessary to acknowledge the diversity (colour, culture, religion, ethnicity, gender) among people. The EWL is therefore calling all governments to take concrete legislative measures in the fight against racism.

The EWL follows with interest the governmental negotiation process in the context of the World Conference against racism, Racial Discriminations and Related Intolerance (WCAR). It generally welcomes the emphasis put on the importance of integrating a gender perspective in the WCAR process, but regrets that throughout the negotiation, debates and drafting process, there is a clear lack of political commitment from governments. The EWL recalls that combating racism in all its forms is a primary responsibility of governments. Furthermore, the forms of multiple discriminations experienced by women, due to the intersection of gender and ethnicity, must be addressed in a comprehensive way.

Recalling the recommendations made in its policy paper of June 2001, the EWL would like to stress once again the following crucial elements in the fight against racism, racial discriminations and related intolerance.

1. The EWL demands the adoption of a **strong and comprehensive Programme of action and follow-up measures**, in particular:

- The adoption of a comprehensive Plan of Action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance encouraging States to elaborate **National Action Plans** (NAPs) identifying concrete policies and programmes at national level and to create national executive body, reflecting the diversity of the society, charged with the task of implementing these NAPs;
- The full integration of a **gender dimension** within the Plan of Action and the NAPs, in particular the elaboration of gender-sensitive and gender-specific guidelines and indicators and the use of gender and ethnicity disaggregated data at all level;
- The commitment to a **review process after a 5 year** period following the WCAR, in order to evaluate and make a critical assessment of the progress made by Governments on the issue of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;
- The development of a **methodology examining the interaction of ethnicity and gender** and identifying forms of multiple discriminations and its effects on women; this methodology should serve as a basis for designing and implementing legal instruments, policies and programmes aiming at the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.
- The recognition of the **role of civil society**, including NGO's fighting racism, minority ethnic groups and victims of racism, and the commitment to strengthening the dialogue and cooperation with them.

- The guarantee of a **robust legal framework**, which both defends the human rights of people, women and men, who experience racism, and at the same time ensures sufficient criminal sanctions for racist behaviour.

2. Stressing that **poverty and social exclusion** are one of the major features of racial discrimination faced by ethnic minority & migrant women, women refugees and asylum seekers, the EWL demands the adoption of measures encouraging their integration into the host country (courses on the language and the culture of the host country, education, free legal advice, health care, good quality and affordable childcare services).

3. The position of migrant women with dependent status being very precarious in many countries because of the lack of individual rights, the EWL demands that States grant **independent legal status and work permit** to spouses of migrant workers and that legislations aiming at protecting migrant women employed as domestic workers from exploitative working conditions and sexual abuses are adopted.

4. The economic empowerment of Black, ethnic minority and migrant women being crucial in order to improve their situation and combat racism, racial discrimination and related intolerance, the EWL urges States to make information on the **education system available to ethnic minority and migrant women** at the grassroots level and promote campaigns aimed at raising consciousness in ethnic minority communities of the importance of education for women and men at all ages, whatever the religious background;

5. **Media** must pay more positive attention to the reality and concerns of Black, ethnic minority and migrant women in order promote a positive and complete image of women's lives, as an alternative to stereotypes that are very damaging.

6. The EWL stresses the very **damaging effects of pornography,** especially in promoting racist stereotypes against Black, Migrant and ethnic minority women who are projected as 'exotic' sexual objects. It is the responsibility of Governments to take all appropriate measures to put an end to it.

7. The EWL underlines that **racism is violating the human rights** of the target groups, in particular with the phenomenon of trafficking for prostitution, sex industry and domestic work. The EWL therefore urges States to adopt concrete measures to fight the phenomenon of trafficking in women and contemporary enslavement of women and children, both by enforcing appropriate legislation and by developing preventive measures in the countries of origin of women and children, victims of trafficking and enslavement; in particular to sign, ratify and implement the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.

8. In all forthcoming developments concerning **immigration, refugee and asylum policies**, the EWL recommends that the specific concerns of women are fully recognised, including the specific needs of women asylum seekers threatened with sexual persecutions, oppressions and violence.